



RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: May 25, 2000

Release Number: 00-48

Contact: Carol Chastang (202) 205-6987

Internet Address: www.sba.gov/news/

SBA HONORS DISASTER RECOVERY EFFORTS, CONTRIBUTIONS TO WELFARE-TO-WORK INITIATIVE

Administrator's Special Award for Lifetime Achievement Also Named

WASHINGTON – Individuals involved in helping their communities recover from disaster, small business owners who paved the way for welfare recipients to become self-employed, and a disabled veteran who became a successful entrepreneur and the winner of the Administrator's Award for Special Lifetime Achievement were honored today by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

The awards were presented this morning during the Phoenix Awards and Welfare-to Work Awards ceremony at the Renaissance Hotel. The event is part of SBA's National Small Business Week celebration.

This year's Phoenix Awards went to small business owners Marilyn and Jay Weisman of Abescon True Value Home Center, to the Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education (Vo-Tech), volunteer Alan Cox, and to Farmers Insurance Group, Oklahoma.

"The Phoenix Award winner come from diverse backgrounds," said SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez, "but they share a love of community that allowed them to work tirelessly to help their neighbors rebuild their lives after the floods and tornadoes, and come back stronger."

Winners of the Phoenix Award for Small Business Disaster Recovery, Marilyn and Jay Weisman's hardware store in Abescon, NJ, was nearly destroyed by floods in August 1997. Yet, they kept their store open to support their neighbors who needed tools to clean up debris and begin to rebuild. They received an SBA disaster loan and continued providing tools to their customers even while they were closed for remodeling.

In the aftermath of the tornadoes that struck the Oklahoma City area on May 3, 1999, Vo-Tech's "Skills to Rebuild" program offered more than 200 free short-term construction training classes and safety briefings to more than 1,700 participants statewide. For their efforts, they received the Phoenix Award for Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by a Public Official.

-- more --

Release No. 00-48/Page Two

Alan Cox received the Phoenix Award for Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by a Volunteer. As pastor of the First Baptist Church in Moore, Okla., Cox set up his church as a command post for local and federal emergency management agencies after last year's tornadoes. His church also served as a shelter for homeless disaster victims.

Hours after the tornadoes struck Farmers Insurance Group had more than 100 agents and adjusters walking through the disaster area identifying clients. To date, Farmers has paid more than \$300 million in claims to 15,000 policyholders in Oklahoma. The agency received the Phoenix Award for Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by an Insurance Company.

Awards were also given to three individuals for their exceptional support of President Clinton's Welfare-to-Work Initiative.

"Welfare-to-Work is an extraordinary success story that couldn't have happened without the support of small business owners across the country," said Administrator Alvarez. **"Our award winners have made a commitment to putting people to work and helping them become self-sufficient."**

The Welfare-to-Work Associate of the Year Award was presented to Christina M. Lundberg of the Small Business Development Center at Shepherd College in Shepherdstown, W. Va. Her efforts to help clients develop business plans and identify start-up costs, along with her follow-up phone calls to keep track of their progress helped seven former welfare recipients become self-employed.

Ricky E. Price of Wahiawa, Hawaii, received the Welfare-to-Work Small Business Owner of the Year Award. The owner of FastLube, Inc., an auto service center, Price spread the word about the Welfare-to-Work program by writing articles for industry magazines and arranging speaking tours for local Welfare-to-Work administrators. He also hired, trained and promoted former welfare recipients, and offered specialized courses to ensure future opportunities. FastLube, Inc., currently has four employees hired through the Welfare-to-Work program.

The Welfare-to-Work Entrepreneur of the Year award was given to Denise F. Frankart of Riverside, Calif. A severe auto accident in 1980 left Frankart in a coma for nearly seven weeks. When she awoke, she was unable to walk, talk or sit up. While in physical therapy, Frankart went on welfare. Determined to help others in her situation, she went back to school and started her own travel agency, Enchanted Tours, in 1977. The company specializes in cruises for travelers with physical challenges.

The Evan Kemp Award was presented to Harry Eugene Van Grevenhof, owner of Eagle Communications of Fort Dodge, Iowa. After breaking his back in an accident in 1992, Van Grevenhof could not continue his trucking career. With his disability, the Vietnam veteran was reduced to collecting cans for a living.

-- more --

He returned to school, studied electronics and computers and learned to recycle laser printer toner cartridges. With the help of a grant from the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities program, Van Grevenhof launched Eagle Communications in 1995, with three part-time employees, all with disabilities.

Administrator Alvarez also presented an Administrator's Award for Special Lifetime Achievement to Deryl Schuster, president of Business Loan Center, a national small business lending company based in Kansas. Schuster is being honored for his dedication to enriching the lives of the disabled, and for his service as a lender to small businesses.

Schuster, who is also chairman of the board of the National Association of Government Guaranteed Lenders, serves on the board of a manufacturing business that hires the severely handicapped, and founded a camp for children with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. Since the camp opened in 1965, more than 10,000 children with disabilities have attended summer camp there free of charge.

For more information on all of SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800-U-ASK-SBA, or visit the SBA's extensive website at www.sba.gov.

###